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## CHILD LABOR IN NEW JERSEY

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For the discussion of child labor in New Jersey there are no official data in which reliance can be placed. The reports of the State Bureau of Factory Inspection are conclusive evidence of the incompetence of the inspector and his deputies. The State Charities Aid Association has recently analyzed the report of the Bureau for the year ending October 27, 1900, and has published the results in the *New Jersey Review of Charities and Corrections*,<sup>1</sup> and it is shown that out of a total of 6,014 factories and bakeshops which were discovered by the Bureau, no less than 1,543 were not visited at all, and yet the department reports favorably on 5,862, indicating that 1,391 were reported favorably, but not visited. According to the 1900 census, however, there were in New Jersey 8,308 factories proper (excluding hand trades), and 1,485 clothing establishments, excluding families working in the tenements. The factory inspectors also report on 1,185 bakeries, so that there appears to have been a total of 10,978 establishments which it was the duty of the inspectors to visit.

The factory inspectors found 5,968 children under sixteen in the 6,014 establishments which they reported; an average of about one child to each establishment. Of these they ordered only fifty-nine children discharged during the year. The census reports an average of 8,042 children under sixteen, employed in manufacturing establishments alone, during the year. Attention should be directed, in this connection, to the difference between the duties of a census taker and a factory inspector. The former furnishes a blank schedule to the manufacturer, which he fills out at his own discretion, without any verification on the part of the census taker. In short, the census agent takes what is given him by the employer, and his interest in the matter is entirely perfunctory. The factory inspector is, however, supposed to make his own investigation and get his own evidence, though it is generally believed that in many cases he contents himself with a visit to the office only and a

<sup>1</sup> Vol 1, No. 4, May, 1902.

polite exchange of social amenities with the employer. While the factory inspector is expected to take a personal interest in his figures, it involves a lot of extra work for him and serious trouble for the employer, if the latter is so thoughtless as to inconvenience him by entering into embarrassing particulars in regard to children. In some instances it is reported that the inspector apprises the factory owner of his intended visit beforehand, the children being given a holiday in honor of the occasion.

The New Jersey laws prohibit the employment of boys under twelve and girls under fourteen, "in any factory, workshop, mine or establishment where the manufacture of any goods whatever is carried on." Children between the ages of twelve and fifteen must have attended school for twelve consecutive weeks (or two terms of six consecutive weeks each) within the twelve months immediately preceding their employment. Children under fifteen must procure a certificate from their teachers giving full particulars as to attendance, etc. The report of the Department of Factory Inspection does not indicate how many of the 5,968 children, under sixteen, are over the age of fifteen, but of the total number of children, only 1,343 were required to produce school certificates. It seems hardly possible that 4,625 of the children employed were over fifteen years of age.

The inspectors have the power to prohibit overcrowding in factories and workshops, and to demand a certificate of physical fitness from some regular practicing physician in the case of minors who may seem physically unable to work. Apparently this gives the inspectors power to prohibit the employment of any girl under eighteen, or boy under twenty-one, who cannot obtain such a certificate, but it is evident from the report of 1900 that this power has not been exercised.

The law prohibits the employment of any child under sixteen "at any work dangerous to health; without a certificate of fitness from a reputable physician." The meaning of this is somewhat ambiguous. Is the physician to certify to the condition of the child or the healthiness of the occupation? Who is to decide as to whether the work is dangerous to health? The questions are, however, entirely speculative, since the factory inspectors have done nothing to indicate any anxiety to put the matter to the test. It does not seem to have occurred to the inspectors that their power to set a standard of physical fitness for children really removes

their chief difficulty. At a recent hearing before Governor Murphy, Inspector Ward pleaded that there were many difficulties in the way of enforcing the laws, his department being confronted with sworn affidavits of parents that their children were over the minimum age of twelve years, while the children themselves are taught with threats never to admit that they are under twelve years old. The test of physical fitness is really much more important than that of age, and the power to apply it gives the factory inspector the whip-hand over both the child's parent and the employer. It seems strange, however, that nothing has been done in this country to define fully the dangerous trades or occupations. The British Parliament appointed a committee some years ago on "Dangerous Trades and Diseases of Occupations."<sup>1</sup> The report of this committee established the fact that lead poisoning is rampant in the potteries, that phosphorus necrosis is common in the match factories, and that naphtha fumes in rubber-manufacturing results frequently in premature aging and paralysis. Among other specially unhealthy occupations may be mentioned glass-making, printing, cutlery, silk-mills, hats, pearl buttons and tobacco. What Mrs. Kelley said in 1896, at the National Conference of Charities and Correction, is equally true to-day:

"The physical condition of working children has never received attention, so far as I know, in any systematic way. There are some desultory provisions in the New York and Illinois factory laws which show there is a dim consciousness in the law-making mind that children may be put at work beyond their strength, unless there is supervision of them by some state officer. But these provisions are so loosely drawn that they are nugatory. The Illinois inspectors are urging upon the Legislature the necessity of adding to the staff a physician who shall give her whole time to the care of the children. There is, at present, no such material available as such a physician could furnish, upon the condition of the children, except the records of measurements made by two volunteer physicians for the inspectors, in 1893 and 1894, covering about 200 children, taken from the factories and workshops of Chicago. These records, published in the Factory Inspectors' Report for 1894, are startling in the proportion which they show of undersized, rachitic, consumptive children at work. They are, however, so

<sup>1</sup>See "The Government Factory Bill of 1900," by Gertrude M. Tuckwell, the Honorary Secretary of the Women's Trade Union League. *Fortnightly Review* for June, 1900.

limited in number that their principal value lies in indicating the wide field open for investigating the working child as compared with the school child. What they show, comparatively, is that the stature of the working child is far less, upon the average, than that of the city school child. The child study of the past ten years bears out the assertion that stature in children is indicative of general development, physical and mental."

The New Jersey Factory Inspectors have the power to call upon the public authorities to furnish truant officers, who are required to act under their direction. But this law is also a dead letter. So too is another law which was passed to regulate the sweat-shop evil, and provides that "No person, firm or corporation shall hire or employ any person to work in any room or rooms, apartment or apartments, in any tenement or dwelling-house, or building in the area of a tenement or dwelling-house, at making, in whole or in part, any coats, vests, trousers, knee pants, overalls, cloaks, furs, fur trimmings, fur garments, shirts, purses, feathers, artificial flowers or cigars, unless such person, firm or corporation first shall have obtained a written permit from the factory and workshop inspectors, . . . which permit may be revoked at any time that the health of the community or of those employed as aforesaid may require it, and that such permit shall not be granted until due and satisfactory inspection of the premises affected shall have been made by the said inspector." By a recent act, overcrowding in tenements or rented rooms is punishable at a fine of \$25.00. Each adult must have 300 cubic feet of air; each child under twelve, 150 feet.

Public authority is thoroughly aroused on the whole question of child labor in New Jersey, and some interesting facts are coming to light. The trades unions are taking the matter up, in several directions, and the searchlight of the press is trained on several of the leading industries—notably the glass factories of South Jersey, the silk and textile mills of Passaic county, and the various tobacco and cigar factories which are scattered over the state. It is stated that each man employed as a glassblower is required to furnish a boy as a "helper," and that a combination of the padrone system and veritable child slavery exists. Incidentally it has been developed that many boys have been placed in the families of glassblowers by private child-placing societies and orphan asylums of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. It furnishes a striking

argument for the public oversight of child-caring agencies. Here are a few letters from local cigarmakers' unions:

NO. 101, ELIZABETH.—“We have Mr. Hilson's machine cigar manufactory here, employing about 300 or 400 hands, all girls; about one-half of them are under age; our union has from time to time been obliged to see the factory inspector to remedy this evil; we informed him about a week ago that in case he further neglects his duty the Union County Trades Council and Cigar Makers' Union would be compelled to see the Governor. The leading brand they make is the “Hoffman House,” which is done up in neat boxes, and as you can readily see they are able to undersell all union goods, as the lowest price for union cigars made is \$8.00 per M., while they can furnish them with the girls working for them for \$2.50 to \$3.00.”

NO. 230, MILLVILLE.—“There is no child labor in connection with our trade in this locality. This being a strong union city we have no use for the production of child labor in our trade. This union covers Millville, Vineland, Bridgeton and Salem. No child labor in either city in connection with this trade; you will find most of the children employed are employed by the American Tobacco Company or Trust. They have a factory in Camden, N. J., this being the nearest one to this city.”

NO. 428, TRENTON.—“There is one place that employs 280, mostly children from ten years old. We had a committee last week working on the subject of child labor employed in this place known as the American Cigar Trust; they say it is safe to say that the ages won't average over fourteen. We know for a fact that their children are not allowed to say a word to one another while at work, if they do they will be discharged. They claimed at one time to have over 300 at work and have room and machinery for over a thousand, but don't seem to get them as fast as they thought. Our committee reported that some of these little tots when they came out at night actually fell down from weakness, but there seems to be no way to stop such work.

“The work that these children do costs the Trust \$2.10 per thousand for making cigars, and the low price for men is \$7.50 per thousand; the average cigarmakers will make 1500 a week of this kind of work, and three of these children with machinery make six thousand a week. You can imagine, when the Trust surely get their feet in it, what will become of cigarmaking.”

Many of the children in the glass works and in worsted mills are said to have been employed on “night shifts.” If the children in state reformatories were worked half as hard as the children in the factories, there would be a perfect storm of indignation. There is, however, a general awakening, and the leading papers in Newark, Paterson, Passaic, Hoboken, Jersey City, Trenton, Camden and other cities have taken the matter up vigorously. The Governor has announced his determination to make the inspectors devote

their entire time to their duties, in accordance with the law just passed, instead of spending their odd moments only in inspecting factories, as has been the case hitherto. Good results are already apparent, and the new inspectors in Essex and Passaic counties are making a strong effort to enforce the laws. The latter has brought suits against several employers for the recovery of the penalty imposed by the state for employing children illegally. There is ample legislation in New Jersey for the regulation of child labor, though the minimum age for boys should be raised to fourteen, and girls to fifteen. Now that the community is informed of the evil, the Legislature may be counted on to make an adequate appropriation for expenses. There ought to be a lawyer on the staff of the Department of Factory Inspection, and an effort should be made to bring the various State Boards into co-operation in the work. It seems curious that no reference has hitherto been made to child labor in any of the reports of the state and local Boards of Health and of Education; nor does the Bureau of Statistics of Labor and Industries seem to know anything of the subject. The various departments of the government seem to be so afraid of overlapping, that in this, as in other matters, they studiously ignore each other.

The "Lord bill," which was passed last session, authorizes the Governor to appoint a woman inspector, and strong pressure is being brought upon Governor Murphy to induce him to do so. The State Federation of Labor has been working for the appointment of a woman inspector since 1897. It is felt that the duties of the office involve personal qualities possessed in an eminent degree by many women, and that a good woman inspector would work a revolution in the department.

The following tables are given for purposes of comparison with other states. The school census of 1900, taken by the state, gave 457,479 children of school age, the enrollment being 322,575. The number of schoolable children is increasing from 7,000 to 10,000 per year. The "persons of school age" in the Federal census cover all from five to twenty years of age, inclusive. The total of them was 572,917 (282,180 males and 290,737 females). The particulars as to parentage are:

Born of American parents.....	271,827
Born of foreign parents in United States.....	226,566
Born in foreign lands.....	54,837
Born of colored parents.....	19,693

[U. S Census, 1900.]

*Persons of School Age, 5 to 20 years inclusive, in New Jersey Cities of 25,000 or more.  
(Showing 62.4 per cent of foreign parentage.)*

	Total.	Native Parents.	Foreign Parents.	Foreign Born.	Colored.
Atlantic City . . . . .	6,782	4,089	1,265	286	1,146
Bayonne . . . . .	10,626	2,812	6,289	1,426	100
Camden . . . . .	22,943	13,793	6,510	1,086	1,557
Elizabeth . . . . .	16,229	5,551	8,729	1,619	331
Hoboken . . . . .	18,699	4,463	11,956	2,258	23
Jersey City . . . . .	63,495	21,535	35,271	5,744	953
Newark . . . . .	74,897	25,210	38,797	9,114	1,789
Passaic . . . . .	9,274	1,653	3,934	3,553	134
Paterson . . . . .	33,170	8,270	18,655	5,965	286
Trenton . . . . .	22,337	10,591	8,999	2,241	508
	278,452	97,967	140,405	33,292	6,827

Notes from the Census Bulletins Nos. 88, 89, 135 and 157 for New Jersey (1900):

Total population of New Jersey . . . . . 1,883,669  
 This was made up as follows:  
 Born of American parents . . . . . 825,973  
 Born of foreign parents in United States . . . . . 556,294  
 Born in foreign lands . . . . . 430,050  
 Born of colored parents . . . . . 71,352

The percentage of the New Jersey population living in cities is 70.6. The states of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut and New York are the only ones which have a larger percentage of their population in cities. In this connection it is interesting to note that New Jersey ranks sixth in the United States in the value of its manufactured products.

The average number of wage-earners employed by manufacturing establishments in New Jersey during 1900 was 241,582 (12.8 per cent of the total population), of whom 8,042 were children under sixteen years of age.

The greatest number employed at any one time during the year was 307,933, or 16.3 per cent of the total population.

The total number of manufacturing and mechanical establishments in New Jersey was 15,481. Of these, 11,115, or 71.8 per cent, were located in forty-four cities and towns. The urban establishments employed 196,901 wage-earners, or 81.5 per cent of the total number employed. The list of industries includes "hand



trades." Omitting them, the total number of manufactures proper was 8,308.

The manufacture of textiles is the most important industry in the state. Of these the silk factories employed 24,157 wage-earners out of a total of 46,932 engaged in textile work.

Foundry and machine-shop products are second, with 17,918 wage-earners.

Refining and petroleum third, with 8,288.

Tobacco has 3,595, pottery 8,117, tanning 4,178, chemicals 3,048, rubber 2,609, jewelry 2,779, sewing machines 4,701, glass 5,383.

The fifteen leading industries of the State embraced 1,780 establishments, and employed an average of 117,008 wage-earners during the year 1900.

Average number of children under sixteen years, employed in New Jersey manufactories during the year 1900 (U. S. Census Bulletin No. 157).

Boots and shoes.....	192
Brass wire.....	65
Bakeries .....	64
Buttons .....	71
Carpets .....	86
Clothing .....	191
Cotton goods.....	641
Dyeing and finishing textiles .....	70
Fireworks .....	85
Foundry and machine shops.....	212
Canning .....	86
Gas and lamp fixtures.....	181
Glass .....	850
Hardware .....	80
Hosiery and knit goods.....	152
Iron and steel.....	65
Linen goods.....	316
Pocket-books .....	60
Pottery .....	193
Printing .....	174
Roofing .....	74
Shirts .....	50
Silk .....	1,199
Stamped ware.....	119
Surgical appliances.....	75
Tobacco .....	183

Woolen goods.....	187	
Worsted goods.....	456	
		6,177
Miscellaneous industries.....	1,865	
		8,042

Comparison of the reports of the United States Census, and of the New Jersey Factory Inspectors, for the year 1900, in regard to children employed in certain industries in eleven cities in New Jersey:

	Census Reports.	Factory Inspectors' Reports.
Bayonne—Petroleum .....	21	0
Camden—Worsted goods .....	160	113
Elizabeth—Tobacco .....	0	30
"    Clothing and shirts.....	9	10
"    Sewing machines.....	0	22
Hoboken and Jersey City—Silk.....	60	60
Hoboken—Clothing .....	9	0
Jersey City—Clothing .....	3	0
"    "    Electrical apparatus.....	45	25
"    "    Printing .....	48	16
"    "    Soap .....	42	21
"    "    Tobacco .....	92	87
"    "    Boxes .....	0	44
Newark—Boots and shoes.....	108	0
"    Carpentering .....	65	0
"    Clothing .....	82	11
"    Corsets .....	34	17
"    Foundry and mechanical shops.....	52	0
"    Hardware .....	75	16
"    Jewelry .....	36	13
"    Leather .....	22	11
"    Stamped ware .....	116	0
"    Tobacco .....	19	35
"    Thread .....	0	100
New Brunswick—Tobacco .....	29	45
Orange—Hats .....	27	5
Passaic—Woolen goods.....	98	15
Paterson—Silk .....	832	504
"    Foundries.....	91	0
Trenton—Iron and steel.....	54	0
"    Potteries .....	118	204
"    Rubber .....	28	47
"    Bakeries .....	19	47